

ALLEN-SCOTT REPORT

By ROBERT S. ALLEN and PAUL SCOTT

WASHINGTON — Wiretapping and phone monitoring have become so prevalent in the national capital that many officials, members of Congress and newsmen are sedulously avoiding discussing confidential matters over the phone.

Instead, they are taking the time and trouble to resort to private conferences.

Graphic instances of the reason for this spreading distrust of telephones in Washington, about which little is being said publicly but which is a common subject of conversation, are the following:

A prominent Southern congressman has personally complained to President Johnson about a suspected tap of his home phone. The indignant legislator related that on one occasion his wife picked up the phone and actually heard a discussion of the tap by two apparent wiremen.

A well-known woman correspondent phoned her newspaper with an exclusive tip on an impending judicial appointment. A half hour later she was called by the White House and sharply informed her information was inaccurate — a claim that was false as the appointment was made several days later. When the news-woman irately phoned her paper about this extraordinary White House kickback, she was emphatically assured her scoop had not been conveyed to anyone.

The press gallery phone booth used by the woman reporter has become highly suspect to other correspondents as a result of this and a series of similar incidents. Pressmen are now referring to this booth as the "tap line."

Staff directors of two Senate committees have installed private phone lines that do not go through the Capitol switchboard. These lines are checked frequently to insure they are not tapped.

A top Democratic congressional leader privately is making no bones that he no longer discusses security matters over the phone because of several experiences that convinced him his phone was tapped.

WHO IS DOING IT

This shocking backstage situation has become so serious that it is under investigation by three congressional committees.

They are the Senate Internal Security Committee, headed by Sen. James Eastland, D-Miss., the Senate Commerce Committee, headed by Sen. Warren Magnuson, D-Wash., and the House government operations subcommittee, headed by Rep. John Moss, D-Calif.

Moss, limiting his probe to phone monitoring, already has established the startling fact that some 40 government agencies are secretly resorting to this practice by using conversation-recording devices.

Sen. Howard Cannon, D-Nev., member of the commerce committee, has first-hand knowledge of wiretapping as a result of a flood of complaints from Las Vegas hotels. They charge numerous instances of Justice Department tapping of their phones, in one case "bugging" the entire switchboard of a hotel by agents operating from a nearby building.

Cannon has a considerable file of correspondence with the Justice Department on these charges and his demand for a full explanation.

Sen. Eastland's Internal Security Committee is probing the wiretapping activities of a private detective agency which reputedly is doing this kind of work for the State Department, Justice Department and Central Intelligence Agency.

Launched six years ago by a former Intelligence officer who served in the OSS during World War II, the agency has a number of branches in the U. S. and abroad. One of its officials sold out his interest after becoming involved in a sensational proxy fight.

During the covert operation, evidence was uncovered about the then-clandestine business activities of "Bobby" Baker, former secretary of the Senate Democrats. This significant information was quietly channeled to the Justice Department and another government agency several years before Baker's affairs became the target of a headlined Senate investigation — that is still smoldering.

The Senate probers have been told that this detective agency was employed to tap the home phone of Otto Otepka, State Department security official suspended last year for furnishing information to the Internal Security Committee "without authorization."

Otepka, still on the State Department's payroll, but kept from doing any work, is awaiting formal proceedings on the charges against him. The department has repeatedly shied away from pressing its complaint.

REVEALING INSIDE REPORT

From a high telephone company official, the Senate investigators have received a lengthy memorandum that sheds detailed light on wiretapping by government agencies. Following are publishable highlights of this revealing document:

"... a private detective agency which has offices in seven cities in the U. S., has contracts with government agencies including one with the Department of Justice.

"... came to Nashville about three months ago allegedly to open a branch office of his firm in Tennessee. In this connection ... approached ... on acquiring his cooperation to allow the tapping of telephones. ... said he does not subscribe to this practice and he declared that should he ever catch ... at it, he would report him to the FBI for violation of Section 605 of the Federal Communications Act.

"Another source, also a former FBI agent, who is acquainted with ... advised that ... does work for the Department of Justice which the FBI does not wish to handle. This source declared that ... is "Bobby Kennedy's boy" working out of Washington, D. C.

"The same source said that ... had stated he is in Memphis working under the industrial security program on a government contract, and has done considerable work in the past for the Central Intelligence Agency and the State Department."